

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 1449

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS DA

SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER'S ANALYSIS OF LIGHTWEIGHT
FIGHTER SITUATION

REF: COPENHAGEN 1365

1. I CALLED ON DEFENSE MINISTER ORLA MOLLER TODAY TO
REVIEW THE CURRENT STATUS OF DEVELOPMENTS ON THE LIGHT-
WEIGHT FIGHTER REPLACEMENT. MOLLER, IN ASKING THAT HIS
COMMENTS BE CLOSELY HELD, CONFIRMED MUCH OF THE ANALYSIS
PROVIDED US LAST WEEK AND REPORTED REFTEL: I.E., IF THE
BELGIANS DO NOT BUTY THE F-16, NONE OF THE THREE REMAINING
COUNTRIES WILL BE IN A POSITION TO OPT FOR THE F-16 NOW.
HE SAID THAT TECHNICALLY A THREE-COUNTRY CONSORTIUM WAS
FEASIBLE AND THAT AN OFFER ALONG THOSE LINES FROM THE US
HAD BEEN ADVANCED. BUT THE POLITICAL IMPEDIMENTS IN THE
NETHERLANDS (PARTICULARLY) AND NORWAY AND DENMARK WERE
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SUCH AS TO PREVENT ITS BEING ACCEPTED.

2. ON THE OTHER HAND, MOLLER SAID HE WAS RELATIVELY CONFIDENT THAT THE DANISH GOVERNMENT WOULD COMMIT ITSELF FOR THE F-16 EVEN IF ONLY NORWAY WENT ALONG. FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW, HE SAID, THE TWOANATION (NORWAY-DENMARK) BUY OF THE F-16 MADE BOTH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SENSE. HE HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN INFORMED BY HIS NORWEGIAN COUNTERPART, DEFENSE MINISTER FOSTERVOLL, THAT THE NORWEGIANS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ENTER INTO A COMMITMENT UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. MOLLER RECALLED THE ATTEMPTS OF THE THREE COUNTRIES TO PERSUADE THE BELGIANS OF THE OBVIOUS SUPERIORITY, IN EVERY RESPECT, OF THE AMERICAN OFFER. MOLLER LAMENTED THE SETBACK FOR NATO, IN TERMS OF STANDARDIZATION, RATIONALIZATION, ETC., THAT WOULD RESULT IF THE BELGIANS DECIDED AGAINST THE F-16. (HE ASSERTED THAT A "POLITICAL MAJORITY" EXISTS IN BELGIUM FOR THE US AIRCRAFT.)

4. IF THE BELGIANS ULTIMATELY DECIDE FOR THE F-16, MOLLER FELT THE DANES COULD MOVE VERY QUICKLY, AND HE WOULD EXPECT TO OBTAIN GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL WITHIN A MATTER OF DAYS. (PARLIAMENT IS SCHEDULED TO ADJOURN THIS YEAR ON JUNE 20.) IF THE CONSORTIUM FALLS APART, THE DANES MUST STILL FACE THE PROBLEM OF PROCURING REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR THEIR F-100'S IN 1980. IT MAY BE, SAID MOLLER, THAT DENMARK ALONE MIGHT ENTER INTO A BILATERAL COMMITMENT WITH THE US LATER THIS YEAR OR NEXT. BUT IT WOULD BE A WHOLLY NEW MATTER AND PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE AS ADVANTAGEOUS TO DENMARK AS THE PRESENT OFFER. FROM MOLLER'S POINT OF VIEW, HOWEVER, THE VIGGEN WILL NEVER BE A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE F-16. IT COSTS A LOT MORE AND DELIVERS A LOT LESS.

5. HE ENDED HIS REMARKS BY EXPRESSING APPRECIATE FOR THE PROPRIETY WITH WHICH THE US AND THE PRINCIPAL F-16 CONTRACTORS HAVE CONDUCTED THEMSELVES IN THIS WHOLE AFFAIR. HE SAID THAT WE HAD NO IDEA OF THE PRESSURES, LEGITIMATE AND OTHERWISE, THAT THE FRENCH AND SWEDES HAVE BROUGHT TO BEAR. EVEN IF THE F-16 WERE NOT THE BEST

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PLANE, HE WOULD PREFER IT BECAUSE OF THE WAY THE COMPETITORS HAD ACTED. HE DESCRIBED THE FRENCH HINTS, WITHOUT COMMITMENT, OF THEIR POSSIBLE RE-ENTRY INTO THE EURO-GROUP AND THE PROPOSALS ON THE EUROPEAN SECURITY COUNCIL AS "SHABBY BUSINESS".

6. COMMENT: WE COULD NOT EXPECT A BETTER MAN THAN ORLA MOLLER AS DEFENSE MINISTER FOR DENMARK. I BELIEVE HE HAS

DONE WHAT HE CAN TO FURTHER THE CAUSE OF THE RIGHT AIR-
CRAFT FOR THESE FOUR COUNTRIES. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES HE
DESCRIBED, I TRUST THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO LOOK VERY
CAREFULLY AT WHAT CAN BE DONE TO INFLUENCE THE BELGIANS.
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